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PP RUEHWEB

DE RUCNDT #0217/01 0781434  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 191434Z MAR 07  
FM USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1539  
INFO RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0574

UNCLAS USUN NEW YORK 000217

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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [UNSC](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: IRAQ BRIEFING TO SECURITY COUNCIL

REF: SECSTATE 31952

11. SUMMARY: Iraqi Vice President Abd al-Mahdi told the Security Council that 2007 will be the year of civil peace and unity in Iraq. The UN Security Council held March 15 its quarterly open briefing (REFTEL) on the activities of the UN Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) and the Multinational Forces - Iraq (MNF-I). The Iraqi Vice President reported that the Baghdad Security Plan (BSP) has resulted in a "noteworthy reduction of violence" and he underlined the international community's responsibility to help Iraq defeat the violent terrorist threat, which is funded and supported by international terrorist networks. Special Representative of the Secretary General to Iraq (SRSG) Qazi also noted the "marked decrease in violence" due to the BSP. He told the Council that the March 10 regional meeting in Baghdad was an important step to build security and stability for Iraq. Ambassador Wolff delivered the status report (REFTEL) on behalf of MNF-I, stressing that the Iraqi government continues its efforts to secure a stable future for Iraq's citizens and progress in the political, economic, and security arenas are all essential to helping Iraq achieve its goals. Council members responded to the briefings with support for UNAMI, the Iraqi government, and the International Compact with Iraq (ICI), calls for Iraqi national reconciliation and an inclusive political process, and urgent appeals for assistance to Iraqi refugees and IDPs.  
END SUMMARY.

SECURITY

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12. During the UN Security Council's March 15 quarterly open briefing for the UN Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) and the Multinational Forces - Iraq (MNF-I), SRSG Ashraf Qazi, Ambassador Wolff, and Iraqi Vice President Abd al-Mahdi all pointed to a reduction of violence due to the new Baghdad Security Plan (BSP). Russia disputed that fact and said there were "no significant results" from the BSP. Indonesia welcomed Iraqi PM Maliki's plan to deal with armed groups and China hoped the BSP would succeed to give hope to Baghdad residents. France noted that the security situation remains "grave."

13. All delegations underlined that a military solution alone cannot achieve security and stability for Iraq. Most Council members stressed that national reconciliation and an inclusive and fair political process are the keys to security and stability. Qatar stated that political solutions "cannot be imported from abroad" but also noted that international support is important for Iraq. The UK agreed that national reconciliation is important, but also stated that the cycle of violence and attacks must be stopped. The Iraqi Vice President responded to Council members' heavy emphasis on the need for an internal political solution by saying that Iraq will "uphold its duties to promote national reconciliation," but much of the violence in Iraq is perpetrated by

international terrorists. This terrorism is funded and supported by international networks and it is the international community's responsibility to help Iraq fight it.

¶4. Russia and France both called for a timeline for the withdrawal of foreign troops, while Indonesia said that foreign troops should be withdrawn when Iraq is ready in order to avoid a security vacuum.

#### POLITICAL PROCESS

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¶5. SRSG Qazi welcomed the March 10 regional meeting in Baghdad and said it was an important step to reducing violence and increasing stability and eventually economic prosperity in Iraq. Qazi underlined that no regional powers at the March 10 meeting called for an MNF-I withdrawal. All Council members joined Qazi in welcoming the regional meeting in Baghdad. Italy encouraged Iraq to expand the meeting to include other important players (namely Italy) and suggested that G8 members participate. China told the Council that the March 10 meeting had a "good atmosphere" and Russia said that it looks forward to the follow-on Ministers meeting.

¶6. Vice President Abd al-Mahdi told the Council that Iraq had made a strategic decision to pursue national reconciliation. Qatar urged Iraq to include "all sects" in a political solution to the country's problems. Slovakia noted that de-ba'athification and the constitutional review are important elements of the political process. Indonesia praised Ayatollah Sistani's fatwa on the importance of inter-sectarian tolerance and harmony and announced an April 2-3 conference in Indonesia on Iraqi national reconciliation.

#### ECONOMY

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¶7. Ambassador Wolff encouraged active participation by regional and global partners in the International Compact with Iraq (ICI) and called it critical to assisting Iraq's development efforts. SRSG Qazi, Vice President Abd al-Mahdi and Council members also fully supported the ICI as an important component of Iraq's economic reconstruction and development.

¶8. Russia said that the new hydrocarbon law should ensure equal access to Iraq's natural resources and argued that all companies from around the world should be on equal footing when competing for contracts to work in the oil and gas sectors. Russian companies are ready to participate in the reconstruction of Iraq, the Russian representative said.

#### REFUGEES

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¶9. Many Council members expressed serious concern about the deteriorating humanitarian situation of Iraqi refugees, mostly in Syria and Jordan, and Iraqi IDPs. The Iraqi Vice President said that IDPs would benefit from the success of the BSP and 100 families have already been able to return home. He welcomed the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) April 17-18 conference on the subject and hoped the meeting would help "end the suffering" of the refugees. Council members emphasized the importance of the UNHCR April conference and pressed for concrete action. Qatar called the refugees' situation a "real crisis" and France said it could become a "genuine humanitarian emergency."

¶10. Before the meeting concluded, SRSG Qazi thanked Council members for their strong support for UNAMI and the Iraqi Vice President called on UN agencies to return to Iraq as conditions become safer and thanked MNF-I for its help in improving the security situation.

WOLFF